

Ohio State University

Art Education

Mostly-On-Line Masters Degree Program

Kelly Wilson
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Chapter 1: Introduction

In the late 1800's, a sixteen year old boy from the Cotswolds in England arrived in Quebec with his brother. He worked his way to Port Huron, Michigan, where he worked as an apprentice in a foundry. After marrying his boss's daughter, he moved to northern Michigan, where he and his father-in-law started a new foundry. One hundred twenty-five years later, this company still exists, and almost anywhere in the world, you can look down and see its name, East Jordan Ironworks, stamped into manhole covers and storm sewer gratings.

The young Englishman who cofounded this company at the age of twenty, and later led it to greatness, was my great grandfather, William Malpass. He became an advocate for the arts and education, and raised thirteen children to value these things. Many of his descendents have become teachers, as did his daughter Grace, my grandmother, and then my mother, Martha, and then I. Most of my grandmother's children were women, and they all grew up strong, creative, and artistic.

I was raised in North Muskegon, Michigan, and attended Central Michigan University. CMU is located in Mt. Pleasant, about 25 miles west of Midland. I earned a B.S. in Art Education in 1991, with a minor in Library Science. My first art teaching job was with the Mt. Pleasant Public Schools. While in Mt. Pleasant I earned a Master of Science in Media and Technology from CMU. In 1998 I was hired as a Media Specialist with the Midland Public Schools. I was a Media

Specialist until 2007, when the media program was eliminated. I am thrilled to be back to my first love, ART!

Midland is located in the center of Michigan about two hours from Detroit. In the 1800's, the chemical bromine was found in abundance in the brine under the Midland area. Herbert H. Dow, a young entrepreneur from Ohio, settled in Midland with the intent of extracting this valuable chemical. The Dow Chemical Company was born! Today Midland is the world headquarters of the Dow Chemical Company and also the Dow Corning Corporation. Families of employees of Dow make up the majority of the 40,000 who populate Midland. The arts and sciences are closely related, and from very early in Dow's history, the arts have been supported and encouraged in Midland. H.H. Dow's son, Alden, studied under Frank Lloyd Wright and eventually became the architect laureate of the state of Michigan. Homes, churches and schools still stand in testimony to the Dows' dedication to bringing the arts to the area.

The 1,633 Chemics of Midland High School boast a 92.4% graduation rate and have almost double the national average of number of students who continue on to pursue a college degree and double the national average of those who pursue graduate degrees. Midland High School, has a population of 93% white, 3% black, 2% Hispanic and 1% Asian, 18% of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch.

Unfortunately, Michigan's financial woes and the resulting education funding issues have had an impact on the Midland Public Schools. Five of the

twelve elementary schools closed with the beginning of last school year. In the future, one of the three middle school buildings will close and it has been projected that in five years one of the two high schools will close. Along with the closures have come curriculum changes. Affecting the high school art department has been the elimination of the humanities courses. With this change, more students are enrolled in beginning art, as students need to satisfy the state fine arts requirement. My position as high school art teacher was created to fill the void when the humanities program was eliminated.

The old humanities classroom had a few markers and colored pencils and a bit of old construction paper. Needless to say, it has been a chore getting materials for my students to use. I was able to glean from the closing elementary art rooms what materials were not absorbed, but I still struggle to provide for my students. The room has been outfitted with a mishmash of tables, and some orange upholstered chairs. My husband and I invested in plywood and built large cabinets to hold eighty bins for student work. These sit in the back of the art room and provide extra counter space. A small kitchen sink affords the only place for clean up. Two teacher desks fit in the front of the room, and the sides are flanked by three thin lockers and two vertical files, and a rolling lab of five computers for the International Baccalaureate students.

Despite these less-than-ideal conditions, my students and I had a great year, due in large part to the influence of the OSU art program on the art curriculum.

Chapter 2: Multicultural Art Education

Content and Purpose of Course

Schools of the future will become increasingly diverse (Goll, Nick, and Chinn, 2008, Page 2). To prepare art educators to critically deal with this reality, they must be exposed to concepts of social and cultural knowledge that affect learning, production, and appreciation of visual/material culture (Hutzel).

When I took Art Education 767 – Multicultural Art Education last fall, I learned many interesting facts and ideas about multiculturalism which are already carrying over into my classroom teaching. One of the most powerful ideas was the concept of service learning, something I had heard about but had never really explored or experienced first-hand. Over the years, I had done many projects that were designed to help people in need, so I was intrigued by the idea of service learning, and was quick to assume that my previous charitable projects were, indeed, service learning. But after reading “Artistically Serving” (Klein and Young), it became clear to me that these projects lacked at least one of the main components of true service learning.

Kendall’s 1990 findings placed great emphasis on the preparation and reflection stages. “Effective projects use recognition to bring together project stakeholders, and value the positive contributions students have made.” What I had been leaving out was the bringing together of the stakeholders. (p.1 Cho)

I had just started my first year of teaching art at the secondary level: three beginning and two intermediate art classes, split between Midland, Michigan’s

two high schools. Before this year, I had taught elementary art, traveling among several buildings and teaching hundreds of kids their once-a-week art class. So I was pleased that my discovery of service learning coincided with my move to secondary, where I'd have the five-days-a-week continuity necessary to really dive into such a project.

Our first service learning project was an exploration of the students' identity to community and the increasing number of veterans in our area. This focus on veterans was also being explored in the high school history and social studies classes. The goal for the beginning art classes was the creation of two projects: first, an acrylic painting on hard board, using analogous colors, and second, a metal project where the students incorporated their own symbol of identity into a military type 'dog tag'.

In September, the planning began for the Veteran's Day program at the high school. I was eager to share the idea of the project and art show with the students. I had at least thirty-four students in each of my three beginning art classes and with this many students and the use of new materials I felt the need to provide some boundaries or rules. I was apprehensive, but I pushed ahead. I provided the students with a preliminary project about the color wheel and the students created their own. Next, student selected either primary, secondary, complimentary or analogous colors to complete a mini project.

The Art 21 video segment on artist Do-Ho Suh and his use of dog tags in his piece "Some/One", was the inspiration of discussion about identity and the military. Images of the military or patriotism were then gathered. Students were

allowed to bring in a personal photograph either depicting something patriotic or of a veteran. Another option was for the students to find an image on the computer to use. As a side note, I did not require that significant changes be made to the pictures from the internet, and in the future that will be imperative. The students used Adobe Illustrator to manipulate their own scanned photographs or drawings. The drawings were then manipulated to appear in three colors. The printed drawings were then traced and transferred to the prepared board. The students then selected their analogous color scheme and began the painting.

The second part of the service learning project came as an afterthought. The students had discussed the use of dog tags in the military with another teacher. The students came to art class still discussing a theory that somehow dog tags were used in the mouth of a service member to secure identity after death. I had heard of this, but disagreed with the students about that theory. We looked it up on line and found that it was not a true theory. The students got 'on a roll' about the subject and I extended the service learning project to include the dog tag. I created a power point presentation about the history of the use of the dog tag. We talked about what we would want others to know about our life after we were gone.

I spent a day instructing the students on the properties of metal, piercing and filing. The students created several sketches and selected one with which to create their own dog tag.

Never had I assigned a project that had them so focused and on task each day. I knew that my students were learning about our theme of identity through the artwork, but I was unsure as to how this was going to be reciprocated by the veterans, and if the students would “get it”.

I worked with the social studies and history departments at both of my high schools to plan the Veteran’s Day activities. I was in charge of contacting the veterans and lining up a panel of at least five vets per class period at each school. As I made contact with the guests, I tried to explain why the art department was involved in the Veteran’s Day activities. Most did not understand their role in “Connecting with Veteran’s through Art”. I recall making contact over the phone and talking fast and furiously about the service learning project. Long silences would follow, and then would finally come... “Well, what time should I be there...?”

The program on Veteran’s Day as well as the response from the students and faculty was excellent. My epiphanatic moment came with the sixth presentation of the day. A group of Vietnam era veterans made up the majority of the panel. They shared with the students the feelings they had experienced upon their return. Others shared stories of loss and sadness. A few of the veterans had stayed all day, and the weariness of recalling difficult times seemed to be taking a toll. The sixth group of students sensed this, and was especially quiet as the soft voices of the tiring guests recalled the sadness of losing a dear comrade, and the horror of battle.

Throughout the day I had seen stellar responses to veterans by students. Standing ovations were given by each group when the discussion was over, and the students were courteous and impressive with their questions. With the sixth and final presentation, the bell rang to dismiss the students. There was a smattering of applause, and some students left. But most of the group, led by my art students, walked down to the veterans, lined themselves up (unheard of since elementary school!), shook the vets' hands, and thanked them for their service.

Over thirty veterans participated in the Veterans' Day program at both high schools. Most had a clear understanding of the goal of the program and most were prepared and were very professional.

The social studies and history teachers and I had prepared the students with discussion of appropriate questions and we had discussed with the military recruiters the purpose of the program. Arrangements had been made for Army pencils and bags and t-shirts to be available for students in the career/counseling office at a later date. What we did not anticipate was the behavior of a Veteran who clearly had some issues.

During the fifth panel discussion of the day, this specific veteran told a horrific story, in very graphic detail, about a beheading that he had been invited to watch by the Village Chief in a small Afghan town. The other members of the panel were as disturbed about this as the students were. In the final session of the program, I had to interrupt the discussion and stop the Veteran from repeating the story.

In the future, I will provide the speakers with information about the student audience. It is so important for them to be aware of the level of understanding and abilities of their listeners.

The final part to the service learning project was the armory show. In the days following the veteran's program at the high school, the students put the finishing touches to the paintings and dog tags. The high school commercial art students created posters and post cards advertising the armory show. Students addressed the postcards to teachers, family and friends. The veterans were invited as well as school administrators and community dignitaries.

Midland has a large community theater program, and I was granted permission to go to their costume rooms and select authentic military uniforms from all eras to display at the armory along with the artwork. Students helped build and paint structures that would display the uniforms. Students labeled artwork and helped to plan the display tables with shelter (tent) halves from a local military surplus store.

The students were excited about the armory show, but in the end were very disappointed with the attendance that evening. We had access to the armory only for an evening, and there were no school activities nearby that would draw more people to the show. Typically, we set up art shows to coincide with conferences or an open house. Hooking the art show to another activity, or at another venue, may have helped with the attendance... although the veterans and community members who did attend thought the show was very successful! Months later I still hear from those who attended or heard about the armory

show. About a month ago, one of our school board members who did not attend thanked me for that program. He had heard what a wonderful program it had been. I also received a call from the local newspaper who would like to do a story about the students and the project next year.

Several students have commented on how the experience of *Connecting With Veterans Through Art* has changed their perception of veterans and the military. Hannah, a sixteen year old student stated “we got their side of the story, like it’s not always what we think it is..., it’s a lot different than what we see on TV”. Hannah’s grandmother had been a nurse on a ship headed to Japan when the bomb hit Hiroshima. Hannah’s grandma was on the panel of veterans. Hannah had never known the details about her grandma’s time in the service until this project.

The students were all in agreement that they were inspired to do better work when there was meaning behind the assignment. **All** students agreed that they wanted to do more service learning projects.

Beliefs and Values

Before I took Multicultural Art Education, I had done many projects that I thought were service learning, but I hadn’t included the most valuable piece: reciprocation from the receiver of the service. For example, earlier in my career, I led a project where students collected yarn for Rwanda. The project was through the United Nations. A woman was going to Rwanda to teach a trade to

refugees of their civil war. There were virtually no men or boys left in the villages, and the women had no income, so the woman was giving them weaving skills and setting up markets in the United States where their wares could be sold. My students studied about Rwanda and the plight of the people there, and we collected over nine hundred skeins of yarn to be shipped. Later we received photos of the women using the yarn we had sent. In a way, this was rewarding, but in hindsight, I can see that a piece was missing. There was no real personal connection between the refugees and the students.

Klein and Young state, "In serving and learning from others, we become better able to make productive judgments based on experience, action, and thoughtful reflection. When individuals are considerate, ethical leadership naturally results." (P. 71)

This thing called multiculturalism is a movement in which students "understand and create meanings of and for life." In a way, traditional educational practices create an environment in which real life, real involvement in the world, is seen as something that they will find at the end of the educational rainbow. What was new for me was that service learning makes it possible for real interaction with the real world to happen now. And the biggest "ah-hah" for me was that true interaction is not one-way... that reciprocation is crucial to the process, and that without it, students are less likely to feel that they can make a difference.

What did I leave behind? Probably the idea that service learning is something that I accomplish myself, with only the incidental help of my students,

along with the idea that they will become engaged simply by bringing in some yarn, collecting some money, or making a pot. Artists need interaction with their “audience”. Givers need interaction with their receivers. For real growth and learning to take place, this interaction is vital.

The service learning experience changed my beliefs and values, because in the process of creating, implementing, and evaluating, I learned how much this type of project can enrich the art curriculum.

Lesson and Unit Plan Development

What was new here was something that really shouldn't have been new: I planned the lesson around what I wanted the students to get out of it. I took the Big Idea for the year, identity, and thought about how students identify with, and relate to, different members of the community. The Social Studies department was planning a program for Veterans' Day, and at the same time, the Ohio State University art department was doing a program called “Art and War”. One of my students was telling me about his brother who was in Afghanistan, and all of these things prompted me to think that connecting with veterans would be a perfect focus for a service learning project. As an end result of the project, I wanted the students to see veterans as part of the community. I wanted the students, who live very sheltered lives, for the most part, to realize that veterans are regular people who have made great sacrifices for the community. I wanted my kids to hear the vets' stories. I wanted the students' artwork to be the means by which they could connect to these brave people. And finally, I hoped that the

veterans, at the same time, could see that the students recognized and appreciated them.

During the planning process, the most difficult hurdle for me was the fact that no funding would be available for a new, unfamiliar project like this one. Another problem was funding for the art materials themselves, as some were not among our usual art supplies.

Throughout the whole process, I spent a lot of time thinking about what was working and what was not, and coming up with ideas for what I would do better next time.

Teaching Practices

As a result of the success of this project, I now look for opportunities to include service learning in the art curriculum. For example, my students just completed a project that is a takeoff on the Homes for Haiti project, where students created a clay pot that reflects traditional Japanese architecture. The pots are being sold, with the proceeds going to a school in Japan, with the help of a local professor.

I have left behind my previously held suspicion that high school students would not be interested in things that are not in their own immediate world. I also came to abandon the notion that they were incapable of planning and implementing a project such as this one. My students erased my doubts with their mature, enthusiastic response to the project. They really proved themselves!

It has been difficult convincing my colleagues in the art department that straying from hammering home the elements and principles of art is not heresy. My ways of engaging students in the process (while at the same time working on those element and principles) have made my fellow art teachers very uneasy. When I have attempted to explain the concepts of Big Idea and Identity to them, they have dismissed them as unimportant. They maintain that nothing significant has happened in the art world in the past thirty years, and that current ideas in art education (especially at Ohio State) are silly.

In the end, however, the biggest obstacle to getting the service learning ball rolling was me! I honestly would not have done a service learning project were it not for the fact that it was required for my Ohio State class. I felt comfortable with my once-a-year collection of canned goods. It was neat and easy, and did not require that I elicit any real commitment from others. I was afraid that the service learning project wouldn't work. I was reluctant to devote class time to such a project, because it was uncharted territory for me.

However, looking at the positive responses I've received from students, parents, and even the Superintendent, I believe that my art program is a good one, and that the service learning component is a major reason why. As Tiarra, a senior in my beginning art class, told me, "This was cool because it had meaning behind it. It wasn't just for nothing." This being my first year teaching art at the secondary level, I know that my teaching practices are not perfect, but I also know that the principles upon which my art program is built are sound, and that my art program will continue to improve and succeed.

Student Work

“This is the best artwork that I have ever done.”

This enthusiastic statement was from Zach, a hard-to-please sophomore. I heard this several times as the students worked on their paintings for the “Connecting with Veterans through Art” project. Never had I assigned a project that had them so focused and on task each day. Never had I experienced one hundred percent student participation and completion. Looking in my grade book, I noted that each student had his or her highest grades of the year during the service learning projects. Students were more enthusiastic about their work. Every day they chatted with their neighbors about war, veterans, family members who had served, and those who were lost.

That is what changed. My students took more pride in their work. They were eager to share what they did, and how they did it, with their friends and parents.

One problem (if you want to call it that) resulting from doing service learning is that, when they are doing “regular” projects, my students miss the sense of purpose associated with service learning projects.

In evaluating their work on the service learning projects, I am aware that motivated students are capable of more than I had thought, so I am less reluctant now to raise the bar for them.

Chapter 3: Teaching Artmaking with Meaning

Content and Purpose of Course

The purpose of Teaching Artmaking with Meaning is for the students to develop a connection between what they're doing and their artwork. This can be accomplished through the development of big ideas, making personal connections, building a knowledge base for artmaking, problem solving, and setting rules for specific projects.

"Artmaking (also) becomes an expression of important [student] ideas related to their own life and the lives of others." (Walker, P. XIII)

Having a Big Idea engages students and artists at a deeper level. The art becomes a "meaning-making endeavor rather than simply the crafting of a product",... (Walker; p.1) when the big idea concept is used.

In art teaching, the big question is-- am I allowing my students to invest themselves in the artmaking or am I asking them to make a copy of my example. In artmaking, the question becomes, am I allowing my art to be the vehicle with which I communicate? Am I constructing meaning through my art?

Beliefs and values

For me, Big Idea was the big new idea! Having students use this to give meaning to their work made good sense. Of course, teachers have been using Themes for years, but Big Idea is an even more powerful tool, because it "provides a conceptual focus – one that extends beyond the study of a particular

medium, technique, design problem, or subject matter – for artists and for artmaking instruction.” (Walker, p. 17)

Also new to me were the tools that are essential in staying focused on the Big Idea. The Key Concepts and Essential Questions give the learner a structured way of grabbing onto the Big Idea. I was thrilled to experience success with not only my first grade students that I taught last year, but my beginning and intermediate art students at the high school level that I teach this year!

What I ended up leaving behind was the randomness of having the season or materials or old curriculum dictate how and what the students learn. I left behind the dictatorship for a more democratic learning process where students make more decisions and have a hand in development of instruction and assessment.

The results of projects based upon the big idea were overwhelming. Students took pride in their work. The students who participated in the lessons with the big idea had the highest grades and highest percentage of completion of that marking period. I am convinced that these results were due to the connection that the students felt when considering their relationship to the big idea of *identity*.

There are several changes that have taken place since I have taken this course. I have included the use of the big idea of *identity* with many projects this school year. Before starting a new lesson, the students and I discuss the assessment and what it should look like. We discuss a timeline and create key

concepts and questions. I have included the students in many aspects of the planning and implementation of lessons.

I have experienced some problems related to the ideas presented in this course. It would not be an understatement to say that I have shaken things up a bit at the two high schools where I teach. I am one of three art teachers at one high school and one of four at another. I am the youngest art teacher at both schools, and coming in with new and exciting ideas does not ingratiate me to anyone! Most believe that the beginning and intermediate art classes should all be academic. At one high school, beginning art students meet each day for fifty minutes, and for the whole first semester they do nothing but use a pencil to draw. You can imagine the uproar when my students, armed with the big idea of *identity*, created paintings and metal dog tags – all the while incorporating basic drawing concepts and the elements and principals of design. Word spreads like wildfire, and although the administration and students love what is going on in my art room, my colleagues do not. I am a fairly quiet person, and I find myself in the midst of a storm. The “senior member” of the art staff has a very loud voice, and has, since the beginning of the school year, questioned each lesson, activity and project that I have created. From an academic standpoint, I understand that change is difficult and that this colleague is struggling. However, she has taken it upon herself to harass and bully me to the point that I have had to take a stand. I have defended my students and the use of ‘big idea’, on numerous occasions, and I have been forced to go to the administration and seek outside support from a civil rights attorney. It had taken a couple of months, and I have agonized over

the decision to keep my job and continue with my program at OSU. I have come to see more clearly that I don't have a problem with the ideas presented in this course, but that others do. I am hoping for a better situation next year.

Lesson and Unit Plan Development

What's new this year? I have wrapped my curriculum around a Big Idea – Identity. I have involved my students in the development of each project and assessment. Given a few examples from me, they have generated a list of key concepts and essential questions that relate to the Big Idea. They then create their projects and write about their personal connection to the artwork.

The students' work is assessed based on their own response to key questions.

I have made it a point to link the students' personal lives and experiences to the Big Idea. I have encouraged self expression, but have kept this focused by having them revisit the key questions.

I left behind doing all the planning by myself. I left behind the teaching of lessons that have no discernable connection to my students. I have left behind the expectation that in any given project, all student work will look the same. I have left behind the expectation the each piece will be gallery-ready. I have left behind the reluctance to have student work that pushes the boundaries.

My biggest obstacle here was my own apprehension... the fear of losing control. I wasn't accustomed to letting kids use their own voices. There is a certain expectation that the students will produce artwork that is "suitable for

framing”, but there has never been the expectation that students actually connect with their work.

As I look back at this school year, I am struck by the fact that student input actually made my planning easier and more effective. The students had a vested interest in the projects, because they were exploring things about themselves. Involving students in the planning eliminated the notion that something was being imposed on them, and therefore they were more invested and less bored. This made it easier to incorporate mini-lessons about such things as technique, principles of design, etc.

Teaching Practices

This year I’m spending considerably less time in front of the classroom, and more time in close proximity to my students and their work. Our classroom time is spent immersed in the artmaking process... either doing hands-on work, or discussing our projects with each other. I am having my students use writing to enrich the creative process. I’m spending much more time getting to know my students as they discuss their personal connection to their artwork.

What did I leave behind? I left behind lessons that did not connect, or did not have the potential to connect, with students. I rejected the routine still used by some of my colleagues:

1. Show an art history slide.
2. Show an example of the project the students are to do.
3. Have them do the project so that it closely resembles the example.

4. Have them turn it in.
5. Put all the projects in front of the class and discuss how good they are.
6. Give them a grade and hand them back.

One problem that I encountered was that not all students felt comfortable enough to share personal experiences or personal connections with the class. It showed in their artwork, which lacked the depth that other students achieved. These reluctant students would have benefited had I been more proactive in building group rapport and trust.

Another problem: Some of my lessons were a bit rough around the edges. This being my first year teaching secondary art, I didn't know what I could expect from my students in terms of response and discussion. I now have a better idea of what will work, and what won't. I also know better now how to elicit responses and get the kids to invest in such things as Big Idea.

At the beginning of the year, I showed a piece of artwork to the class, and then had them break into groups. I then asked them to come up with group answers to some questions I had passed out. The students just sat there! They didn't move. They didn't discuss. My first ah-hah moment of the year hit me like a ton of bricks: These kids aren't going to wave their hands in the air like first graders!

Later in the year, after the kids had warmed up to each other and I knew them better, and after they had absorbed the idea that everyone had to respond from time to time, we had some pretty lively, productive discussions.

As I reflect on my first year teaching high school art, I have found that my expectations need to be higher and more consistent.

One thing I've discovered is that some students show up on the first day of art class expecting an easy A. There were kids who actually said, "This is just a point-two class. I should get an A for just showing up." Some of them proceeded to spend art class doing homework, listening to their iPods, or wandering around. Then, when they got D's or E's on their progress reports, they were offended, even after I had shown them their zeroes in my grade book.

Of course, these kids were a minority, but even so, there are several things I plan to do differently this fall to make the classroom environment reflect what I expect from students:

1. I will establish clear classroom rules, requiring that my students spend their class time working on their art projects.
2. I will plan more thoroughly, and avoid "seat-of-the-pants" lessons.
3. I will expect active participation from all students in class discussions.
I will help this along by calling on individual students to share their thoughts, and by responding to them in a way that encourages further participation.
4. I will model the kind of behavior that builds trust and enthusiasm.
5. I will keep the Big Idea, key concepts, and essential questions always close by, to help us stay focused on a common goal.

Student Work

What was new for me was seeing my students really connecting with their artwork. They became involved in the planning, discussion, and evaluation of their work. Their focus changed from product to process... investigation, thought, planning, reflection, and the development of their own connection to art work.

What changes occurred in student work? I observed that when students worked for an audience, as they did in the show at the armory, they became more involved, enjoyed their work more, and got better grades. In the future I will make it a point to create more opportunities for my students to connect with their community through art.

Similarly, students tended to take home the work that they developed in relation to the Big Idea. Projects that were not related to the Big Idea tended to be thrown away. At the end of the school year I gave a few mini-lessons and had the kids do small projects just to kill time in the last few days. Kids started to ask, "How does this fit in with Big Idea?" They still wanted that connection!

Using writing to explain, evaluate, and connect their work to the Big Idea was another thing that worked well. I didn't have high expectations about what kids would write, but their responses were really well thought out. Andrew M, a twelfth-grader, wrote, "I learned that art is a way to express your feelings and emotions in a creative way."

Physical Environment

What was new? Well, of course for me the move from elementary to high school involved a huge change in physical environment. Also, being in contact with the same students five days a week was new, and created so many more opportunities. We were able to make physical groupings that enhanced the learning experience by making it easier for us to interact.

There were few actual physical changes in the classroom over the year, but one major change that occurred was that our classroom started to extend beyond its physical walls... As we explored the Big Idea and learned about people with different identities from ours, the community worked its way into our classroom, and we worked our way into our community.

By having my classes participate in a service learning project, I have built a connection with these students, and with some of my fellow staff members. I have seen the importance of the connection between meaning and student work, and I have added this to my curriculum.

I continue to think in terms of how to incorporate service learning into the curriculum. My students will do some writing and reflection this week during the exam, and I will be asking for their input as to what big idea could be the focus of my art classes for next school year. I'll be very interested in their comments.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

What key changes have occurred in my understandings about art teaching?

There have been several. One is that in order for the students to really become invested in their artwork, a real connection has to be constructed. Previous incarnations of art education were all about teaching the elements and principles of design, techniques of basic drawing, and art history. Those things were the curriculum, and those who mastered them were given a license to create art. Now, finally, it's about the process! Now it's about using those time honored elements (still very important) as tools, not as goals in themselves. Now it's about ideas... Big Ideas. It's about relating art to self and community by becoming involved in such things as service learning. As Dr. Walker stated in our first class, good art teaching is itself an art... the ability to slip in those lessons about technique, elements, etc. while the students are working on a project that is actually relevant to their lives.

Another change in my understanding about art teaching is that students need to become involved in the planning and preparation, as well as evaluation, of their work. They need to be involved in all aspects.

Another thing I learned was that students need to connect with other human beings... peers, teachers, other caring adults... with whom they can build trust. Students need help building the confidence to develop their own voice.

And so I must do everything in my power to make the art room a nurturing environment for all.

Research by Walker, Hutzler, and Klein has shed a lot of light on the elements that lead to successful student work, and I'm starting to have similar success with my students.

What areas do I plan to continue to pursue?

A year after I started taking the OSU art program, I switched from elementary art teacher to high school art teacher. I'm fortunate, because when I assumed my new role, I used what I learned in the OSU art program to do my lessons.

I had great success with using Big Idea. The seeds of this change were laid when I was still in elementary, working with a group of fifth graders. We were looking at Clifford Smith's "Ocean Fields", a painting featuring nothing but a close-up view of ocean water, and I asked, "What can you tell about this artist by looking at his/her artwork?" The question was greeted by silence. They were confused, shy, and not about to venture any opinions, so I just started asking more questions. Finally, one of the kids, not a stellar student by any stretch, came out with what he probably thought was a smart aleck answer: "He's a boring old man!" I responded by asking how he knew this. "Because it's just an old picture of water." I asked why someone would want to paint a picture of only water. And then other kids started to chime in. "Maybe he wanted to remember

water for some reason.” “Maybe he wanted to come back to the water someday.” We came up with the idea that the water was part of his identity... that he must have grown up around water. I talked about how I had grown up around Lake Michigan, so it was part of my identity too. And we had a great discussion! It wasn’t just me saying, “This painting is by so-and-so. This is what it’s about. This is why it’s art.” It was the students and their own exploration of the piece, and their own meaning-making, that led them to answering the questions about who the artist was and what he had to say. They were able to look critically at the piece. They were now able to do more than just dismiss this artwork. And we all took a step forward in that class. We learned that even though we’re still fifth graders, our opinions do matter. How exciting for them... and for me. This success in an elementary art class helped give me the confidence to enter the world of high school art. I felt more empowered. I can do this, I thought. The kids are getting it. It works.

So I plan to continue to use Big Idea as the foundation of my teaching. I may go by semesters instead of whole year; I’m not sure yet. I will also continue to do service learning projects, this time with even more student input in choosing and planning.

I am meeting with other art teachers in the district, and I emailed them some of our handouts. A group is going to be meeting to create a sort of skeleton assessment tool. Based on the assessment course, we’re going to look at how we assess our students, and the best way to assess, including portfolios and other things we talked about in Dr. Parsons’ class.

What questions do I now have about art teaching?

I am sure that some of my questions will be answered “on the job”, as I gain more experience. Others may persist, or recur in different form, throughout my career. Here are some that I have now:

How do I get my colleagues, who have been doing the same lessons for the last twenty years, to accept my way of teaching? How do I get them to take what I’m doing seriously? I am hoping that the success of what I do, along with student enthusiasm, will be the answer. But it’s difficult to convince them that just because students are happy and interested, they are in a good art program. Art class doesn’t need to be grueling to be valuable.

I want my colleagues to be excited about my success. That’s my problem. They don’t have to like what I do.

Another question: Once my participation in the OSU art program is a thing of the past, and I’m away from the wonderful built-in support system, will I remain strong enough to know that what I’m doing is valuable, and important, and valid educationally?

How do I manage a class of thirty-four beginning art students? How do I keep them all involved... participating...? I don’t want to be doing as much as I’m doing in terms of decision making, but it’s hard to get freshmen to be confident enough to chime in.

How do I get them to recognize good work in themselves and others?
How do I get the students who come to my art class expecting an easy A to buy

in to what we're doing and put in a good hour's work each day? How do I legitimize art in the eyes of the students who don't see art as an important subject? How do I get them to not be passive? How do I get my kids to talk... to exchange ideas... to challenge me, each other, and the status quo? How do I get them to believe that there isn't just one right answer? How do I get them to stop seeing the teacher's role as the Keeper of the Answers?

I am thankful that I have had the chance to participate in the OSU Art Education Masters Program, even though (or perhaps because) I come out of it with more questions than I had when I came in. It's the questions, and the quest for answers, that keep life interesting and allow us to grow.

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